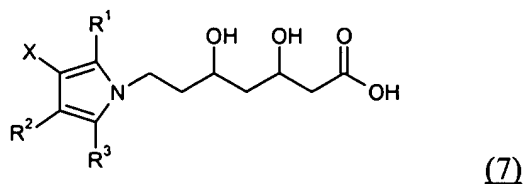


In the claims:

1. **(currently amended)** A process for the preparation of a compound of formula (7) or salts thereof:



wherein

R¹ represents a hydrogen or a hydrocarbyl group;

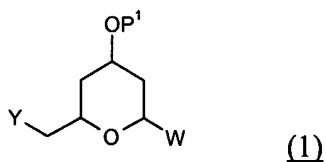
R² represents a hydrogen or substituent group;

R³ represents a hydrogen or a hydrocarbyl group;

X represents a hydrogen or substituent group;

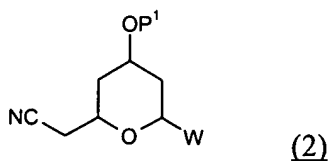
which comprises

- a) cyanating a compound of formula (1):

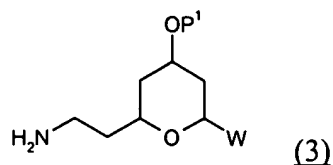


wherein Y represents a halo group, preferably Cl or Br; P¹ represents hydrogen or a protecting group, and W represents =O or -OP², in which P² represents hydrogen or a protecting group,

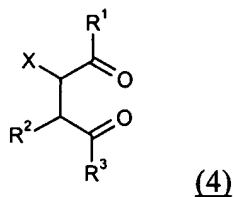
to give a compound of formula (2):



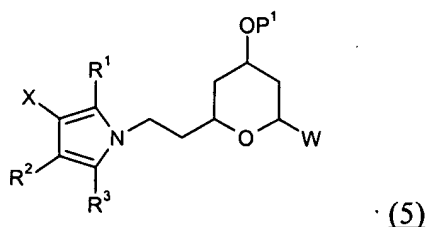
- b) reducing the compound of formula (2) to give a compound of formula (3):



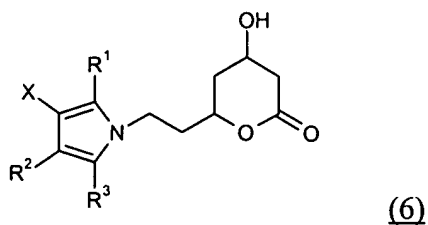
c) coupling the compound of formula (3) with a compound of formula (4):



to give a compound of formula (5):

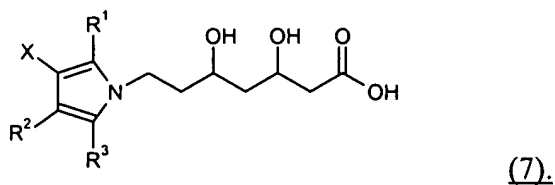


d) when W represents -OP², deprotecting and then oxidising the compound of formula (5) to give a compound of formula (6):

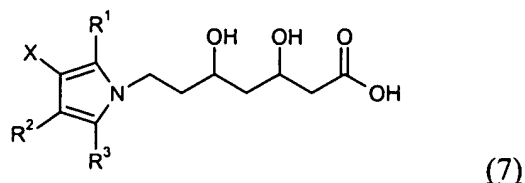


and

e) subjecting the compound of formula (5) when W represents =O, or compound of formula (6) to ring-opening, and removal of any remaining protecting groups, to give a compound of formula (7) or salts thereof:



2. **(currently amended)** [[A]] The process according to Claim 1 for the preparation of a compound of formula (7) or salts thereof:



wherein

R¹ represents an alkyl group, such as a C₁₋₆ alkyl group, and preferably an isopropyl group;

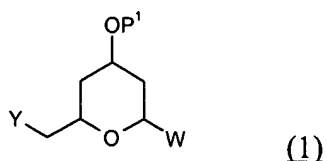
R² represents an aryl group, preferably a phenyl group;

R³ represents an aryl group, preferably a 4-fluorophenyl group;

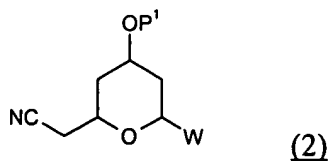
X a group of formula -COZ, wherein Z represents -OR⁴, in which R⁴ represents an alkyl, preferably a methyl or ethyl, group, or -NR⁵R⁶, wherein R⁵ and R⁶ each independently represent H, alkyl, or aryl, and preferably R⁵ is H and R⁶ is phenyl;

which comprises

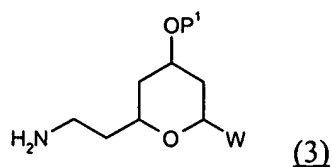
a) cyanating a compound of formula (1):



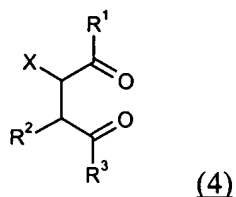
wherein Y represents a halo group, preferably Cl or Br; P¹ represents hydrogen or a protecting group, and W represents =O or -OP², in which P² represents hydrogen or a protecting group, to give a compound of formula (2):



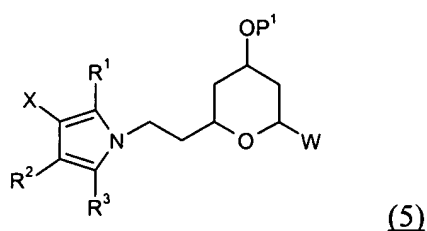
b) reducing the compound of formula (2) to give a compound of formula (3):



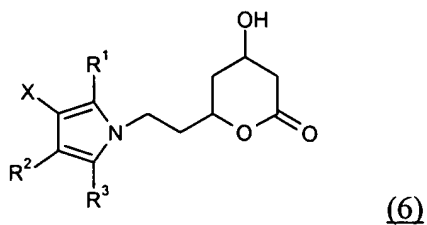
c) coupling the compound of formula (3) with a compound of formula (4):



to give a compound of formula (5):

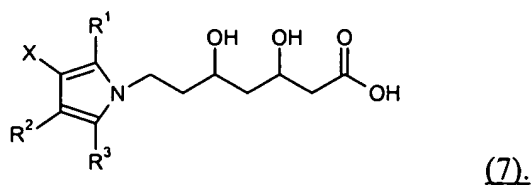


d) when W represents -OP², deprotecting and then oxidising the compound of formula (5) to give a compound of formula (6):



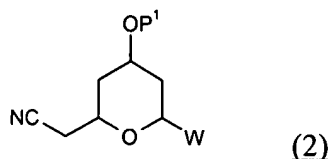
and

e) subjecting the compound of formula (5) when W represents =O, or compound of formula (6) to ring-opening, and removal of any remaining protecting groups, to give a compound of formula (7) or salts thereof:

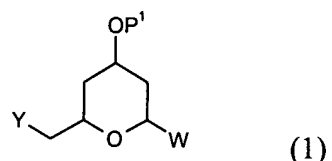


3. **(currently amended)** [[A]] The process according to Claim 2 wherein R¹ is an isopropyl group, R² is a phenyl group, R³ is a 4-fluorophenyl group and X is a -CO₂Me, -CO₂Et or -CONHPh group.

4. **(currently amended)** A process for the preparation of a compound of formula (2):

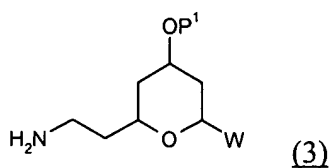


which comprises cyanating a compound of formula (1):

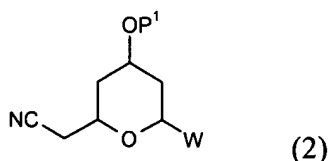


wherein Y represents a halo group, preferably Cl or Br; P¹ represents hydrogen or a protecting group, and W represents =O or -OP², in which P² represents hydrogen or a protecting group.

5. **(currently amended)** A process for the preparation of a compound of formula (3):



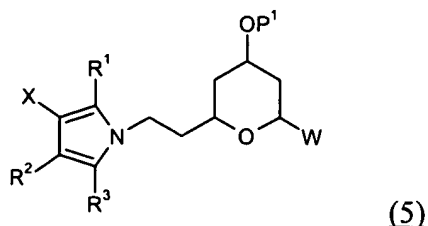
which comprises reduction of a compound of formula (2):



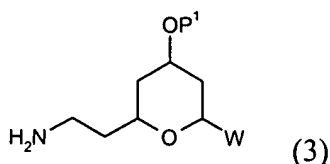
wherein P¹ represents hydrogen or a protecting group, and W represents =O or -OP², in which P² represents hydrogen or a protecting group.

6. **(currently amended)** [[A]] The process according to Claim 4 [[or Claim 5]] wherein P¹ represents a benzyl or a silyl group, and W represents =O or -OP², in which P² represents a methyl group.

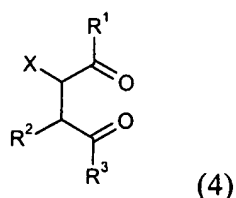
7. **(currently amended)** A process for the preparation of a compound of formula (5):



which comprises coupling the compound of formula (3):



with a compound of formula (4):



wherein

R¹ represents an alkyl group, such as a C₁₋₆ alkyl group, and preferably an isopropyl group;

R² represents an aryl group, preferably a phenyl group;

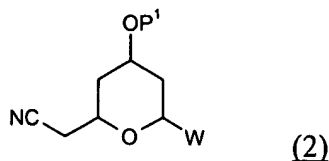
R³ represents an aryl group, preferably a 4-fluorophenyl group;

X a group of formula -COZ, wherein Z represents -OR⁴, in which R⁴ represents an alkyl, preferably a methyl or ethyl, group, or -NR⁵R⁶, wherein R⁵ and R⁶ each independently represent H, alkyl, or aryl, and preferably R⁵ is H and R⁶ is phenyl;

P¹ represents hydrogen or a protecting group, preferably a benzyl or silyl group; and

W represents =O or -OP², in which P² represents hydrogen or a protecting group, preferably OP² where P² is a methyl group.

8. **(currently amended)** A compound of formula (2):

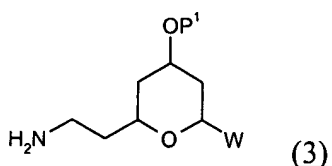


wherein P¹ represents hydrogen or a protecting group, and W represents =O or -OP², in which P² represents hydrogen or a protecting group.

9. **(currently amended)** [[A]] The compound according to Claim 8 wherein P¹ is a protecting group and preferably W represents -OP², and more preferably P¹ and P² are different.

10. **(currently amended)** [[A]] The compound according to Claim 9 wherein P¹ is a benzyl or silyl group and W represents OP² where P² is a methyl group.

11. **(currently amended)** A compound of formula (3):

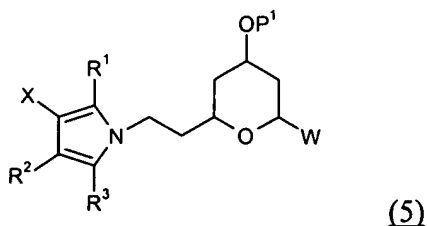


wherein P¹ represents hydrogen or a protecting group, and W represents =O or -OP², in which P² represents hydrogen or a protecting group.

12. **(currently amended)** [[A]] The compound according to Claim 11 wherein P¹ is a protecting group and preferably W represents -OP², and more preferably P¹ and P² are different.

13. **(currently amended)** [[A]] The compound according to Claim 12 wherein P¹ is a benzyl or silyl group and W represents OP² where P² is a methyl group.

14. **(currently amended)** A compound of formula (5):



wherein

R¹ represents an alkyl group, such as a C₁₋₆ alkyl group, and preferably an isopropyl group;

R² represents an aryl group, preferably a phenyl group;

R³ represents an aryl group, preferably a 4-fluorophenyl group;

X a group of formula -COZ, wherein Z represents -OR⁴, in which R⁴ represents an alkyl, preferably a methyl or ethyl, group, or -NR⁵R⁶, wherein R⁵ and R⁶ each independently represent H, alkyl, or aryl, and preferably R⁵ is H and R⁶ is phenyl;

P¹ represents hydrogen or a protecting group; and

W represents -OP², in which P² represents hydrogen or a protecting group.

15. (new) The process according to Claim 5 wherein P¹ represents a benzyl or a silyl group, and W represents =O or -OP², in which P² represents a methyl group.